

The Place of Safety

By E. G. Swain

“I thank my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters,” said Wardle, as he lit a cigar after breakfast, “that I never acquired a taste for that sort of thing.”

Wardle was a pragmatical and candid friend who paid Mr. Batchel occasional visits at Stoneground. He regarded antiquarian tastes as a form of insanity, and it annoyed him to see his host poring over registers, churchwardens’ accounts, and documents which he contemptuously alluded to as “dirty papers.” “If you would throw those things away, Batchel,” he used to say, “and read the *Daily Mail*, you’d be a better man for it.”

Mr. Batchel replied only with a tolerant smile, and, as his friend went out of doors with his cigar, continued to read the document before him, although it was one he had read twenty times before. It was an inventory of church goods, dated the 6th year of Edward VI.—to be exact, the 15th May, 1552. By a royal order of that year, all Church goods, saving only what sufficed for the barest necessities of Divine Service, were collected and deposited in safe hands, there to await further instructions. The instructions, which had not been long delayed, had consisted in a curt order for seizure. Everyone who cares for such matters, knows and laments the grievous spoliation of those times.

Mr. Batchel’s document, however, proved that the Churchwardens of the day were not incapable of self-defence. They were less dumb than sheep before the shearers. For, on the copy of the inventory of which he had become possessed, was written the Commissioners’ Report that “at Stoneground did John Spayn and John Gounthropp, Churchwardens, declare upon their othes that two gilded senseres with candellstickes, old paynted clothes, and other implements, were contayned in a chest which was robbed on St. Peter’s Eve before the first inventorye made.”

Mr. Batchel had a shrewd suspicion, which the reader will not improbably share, that John Spayne and his colleague knew more about the robbery than they chose to admit. He said to himself again and again, that the contents of the chest had been carefully concealed until times should mend. But from the point of view of the Churchwardens, times had not mended. There was evidence that Stoneground had been in no mood to tolerate censers in the reign of Mary, and it seemed unlikely that any later time could have re-admitted the ancient ritual. On this account, Mr. Batchel had never ceased to believe that the contents of the chest lay somewhere near at hand, nor to hope that it might be his lot to discover it.

Whenever there was any work of the nature of excavation or demolition within a hundred yards of the Church, Mr. Batchel was sure to be there. His presence was very distasteful in most cases, to the workmen engaged, whom it deprived of many intervals of leisure to which they were accustomed when left alone. During a long course of operations connected with the restoration of the Church, Mr. Batchel’s vigilance had been of great advantage to the work, both in raising the standard of industry and in securing attention to details which the builders were quite prepared to overlook. It had, however, brought him no nearer to the censers and other contents of the chest, and when the work was completed, his hopes of discovery had become pitifully slender.

Mr. Wardle, notwithstanding his general contempt for antiquarian pursuits, was polite enough to give Mr. Batchel’s hobbies an occasional place in their conversation, and in this way was

informed of the “stolen” goods. The information, however, gave him no more than a very languid interest.

“Why can’t you let the things alone?” he said, “what’s the use of them?”

Mr. Batchel felt it all but impossible to answer a man who could say this; yet he made the attempt.

“The historic interest,” he said seriously, “of censers that were used down to the days of Edward VI. is in itself sufficient to justify—”

“Etcetera,” said his friend, interrupting the sentence which even Mr. Batchel was not sure of finishing to his satisfaction, “but it takes so little to justify you antiquarians, with your axes and hammers. What can you do with it when you get it, if you ever do get it?”

“There are two censers,” Mr. Batchel mildly observed in correction, “and other things.”

“All right,” said Wardle; “tell me about one of them, and leave me to do the multiplication.”

With this permission, Mr. Batchel entered upon a general description of such ancient thuribles as he knew of, and Wardle heard him with growing impatience.

“It seems to me,” he burst in at length, “that what you are making all this pother about is a sort of silver cruet-stand, which was thin metal to begin with, and cleaned down to the thickness of egg-shell before the Commissioners heard of it. At this moment, if it exists, it is a handful of black scrap. If you found it, I wouldn’t give a shilling for it; and if I would, it isn’t yours to sell. Why can’t you let the things alone?”

“But the interest of it,” said Mr. Batchel, “is what attracts me.”

“It’s a pity you can’t take an interest in something less uninteresting,” said Wardle, petulantly; “but let me tell you what I think about your censers and all the rest of it. Your Churchwardens lied about them, but that’s all right; I’d have done the same myself. If their things couldn’t be used, they were not going to have them abused, so they put them safely out of the way, your’s and everybody’s else.”

“I was not proposing to abuse them,” interrupted Mr. Batchel.

“Were you proposing to use them?” rejoined Wardle. “It’s one thing or the other, to my mind. There are people who dig out Bishops and steal their rings to put in glass cases, but I don’t know how they square the police; and it’s the same sort of thing you seem to be up to. Let the things alone. You’re a Prayer Book man, and just the sort the Churchwardens couldn’t stomach. You talk fast enough at the Dissenters because they want to collar your property now. Why can’t you do as you would be done by?”

Mr. Batchel thought it useless to say any more to a man in so unsympathetic an attitude, or to enter upon any defence of the antiquarian researches to which his friend had so crudely referred. He did not much like, however, to be anticipated in a theory of the “robbery” which he felt to be reasonable and probable. He had hoped to propound the same theory himself, and to receive a suitable compliment upon his penetration. He began, therefore, somewhat irritably, to make the most of conjectures which, at various times, had occurred to him. “Men of that sort,” he said, “would have disposed of the censers to some one who could go on using them, and in that case they are not here at all.”

“Men of that sort,” answered Wardle, “are as careful of their skins as men of any other sort, and besides that, your Stoneground men have a very good notion of sticking to what they have got. The things are here, I daresay, if they are anywhere; but they are not yours, and you have no business to meddle with them. If you would spend your time in something else than poking about after other people’s things, you’d get better value for it.”

This brief conversation, in which Mr. Batchel had scarcely been allowed the part to which he felt entitled, was in one respect satisfactory. It supported his belief that the censers lay somewhere within reach. In other respects, however, the attitude of Wardle was intolerable. He was evidently out of all sympathy with the quest upon which Mr. Batchel was set, and, for their different reasons, each was glad to drop the subject.

During the next two or three days, the matter of the censers was not referred to, if only for lack of opportunity. Wardle was a kind of visitor for whom there was always a welcome at Stoneground, and the welcome was in his case no less cordial on account of his brutal frankness of expression, which, on the whole, his host enjoyed. His pungent criticisms of other men were vastly entertaining to Mr. Batchel, who was not so unreasonable as to feel aggrieved at an occasional attack upon himself.

A guest of this unceremonious sort makes but small demands upon his host. Mr. Wardle used to occupy himself contentedly and unobtrusively in the house or in the garden whilst his host followed his usual avocations. The two men met at meals, and liked each other none the less because they were apart at most other times. A great part of Mr. Wardle's day was passed in the company of the gardener, to whose talk his own master was but an indifferent listener. The visitor and the gardener were both lovers of the soil, and taught each other a great deal as they worked side by side. Mr. Wardle found that sort of exercise wholesome, and, as the gardener expressed it, "was not frit to take his coat off."

The gardening operations at this time of year were such as Mr. Wardle liked. The overcrowded shrubberies were being thinned, and a score or so of young shrubs had to be moved into better quarters. Upon a certain morning, when Mr. Batchel was occupied in his study, some aucubas were being transplanted into a strip of ground in front of the house, and Wardle had undertaken the task of digging holes to receive them. It was this task that he suddenly interrupted in order to burst in upon his host in what seemed to the latter a repulsive state of dirt and perspiration.

"Talk of discoveries," he cried, "come and see what I've found."

"Not the censers, I suppose," said Mr. Batchel.

"Censers be hanged," said Wardle, "come and look."

Mr. Batchel laid down his pen, with a sigh, and followed Wardle to the front of the house. His guest had made three large holes, each about two feet square, and drawing Mr. Batchel to the nearest of them, said "Look there."

Mr. Batchel looked. He saw nothing, and said so.

"Nothing?" exclaimed Wardle with impatience. "You see the bottom of the hole, I suppose?"

This Mr. Batchel admitted.

"Then," said Wardle, "kindly look and see whether you cannot see something else."

"There is apparently a cylindrical object lying across the angle of your excavation," said Mr. Batchel.

"That," replied his guest, "is what you are pleased to call nothing. Let me inform you that the cylindrical object is a piece of thick lead pipe, and that the pipe runs along the whole front of your house."

"Gas-pipe, no doubt," said Mr. Batchel.

"Is there any gas within a mile of this place?" asked Wardle.

Mr. Batchel admitted that there was not, and felt that he had made a needlessly foolish suggestion. He felt safer in the amended suggestion that the object was a water-pipe.

An ironical cross-examination by Mr. Wardle disposed of the amended suggestion as completely as he had disposed of the other, and his host began to grow restive. "If this sort of discovery pleases you," he said testily, "I will not grudge you your pleasure, but, to quote your own words, why can't you let it alone?"

"Have you any idea," said Mr. Wardle, "of the value of this length of piping, at the present price of lead?"

Even Mr. Wardle could hardly have suspected his host of knowing anything so preposterous as the price of lead, but he felt himself ill-used when Mr. Batchel disclaimed any interest in the matter, and returned to his study.

Wardle had a commercial mind, which elsewhere was the means of securing him a very satisfactory income, and on this account, his host, as he resumed his work indoors, excused what he regarded as a needless interruption.

He little suspected that his friend's commercial mind was to do him the great service of putting him in possession of the censors, and then to do him a disservice even greater.

Had any such connexion so much as suggested itself, Mr. Batchel would more willingly have answered to the summons which came an hour later, when the gardener appeared at the window of the study, evidently bursting with information. When he had succeeded in attracting his master's attention, and drawn him away from his desk, it was to say that the whole length of pipe had been uncovered, and found to issue from a well on the south side of the house.

The discovery was at least unexpected, and Mr. Batchel went out, even if somewhat grudgingly, to look at the place. He came upon the well, close by the window of his dining-room. It had been covered by a stone slab, now partially removed. The narrow trench which Wardle and the gardener had made in order to expose the pipe, extended eastwards to the corner of the house, and thence along the whole length of the front, probably to serve a pump on the north side, where lay the yard and stables. The pipe itself, Mr. Wardle's prize, had been withdrawn, and there remained only a rusted chain which passed from some anchorage beneath the soil, over the lip of the well. Mr. Batchel inferred that it had carried, and perhaps carried still, the bucket of former times, and stooped down to see whether he could draw it up. He heard, far below, the light splash of the soil disturbed by his hands; but before he could grasp the chain, he felt himself seized by the waist and held back.

The exaggerated attentions of his gardener had often annoyed Mr. Batchel. He was not allowed even to climb a short ladder without having to submit to absurd precautions for his safety, and he would have been much better pleased to have more respect paid to his intelligence, and less to his person. In the present instance, the precaution seemed so unnecessary that he turned about angrily to protest, both against the interference with his movements, and the unseemly force used.

It was at this point that he made a disquieting discovery. He was standing quite alone. The gardener and Mr. Wardle were both on the north side of the house, dealing with the only thing they cared about—the lead pipe. Mr. Batchel made no further attempt to move the chain; he was, in fact, in some bodily fear, and he returned to his study by the way he had come, in a disordered condition of mind.

Half an hour later, when the gong sounded for luncheon, he was slowly making his way into the dining-room, when he encountered his guest running downstairs from his room, in great spirits. "A trifle over two hundredweight!" he exclaimed, as he reached the foot of the staircase, and seemed disappointed that Mr. Batchel did not immediately shake hands with him upon so

fine a result of the morning's work. Mr. Batchel, needless to say, was occupied with other recollections.

"I suppose it is unnecessary to ask," said he to his guest as he proceeded to carve a chicken, "whether you believe in ghosts?"

"I do not," said Wardle promptly, "why should I?"

"Why not?" asked Mr. Batchel.

"Because I've had the advantage of a commercial education," was the reply, "instead of learning dead languages and soaking my mind in heathen fables."

Mr. Batchel winced at this disrespectful allusion to the University education of which he was justly proud. He wanted an opinion, however, and the conversation had to go on.

"Your commercial education," he continued, "allows you, I daresay, to know what is meant by a hypothetical case."

"Make it one," said Wardle.

"Assuming a ghost, then, would it be capable of exerting force upon a material body?"

"Whose?" asked Wardle.

"If you insist upon making it a personal matter," replied Mr. Batchel, "let us say mine."

"Let me have the particulars."

In reply to this, Mr. Batchel related his experience at the well.

Mr. Wardle merely said "Pass the salt, I need it."

Undeterred by the scepticism of his friend, Mr. Batchel pressed the point, and upon that, Mr. Wardle closed the conversation by observing that since, by hypothesis, ghosts could clank chains, and ring bells, he was bound to suppose them capable of doing any silly thing they chose. "A month in the City, Batchel," he gravely added, "would do you a world of good."

As soon as the meal was over, Mr. Wardle went back to his gardening, whilst his host betook himself to occupations more suited to his tranquil habits. The two did not meet again until dinner; and during that meal, and after it, the conversation turned wholly upon politics, Mr. Wardle being congenially occupied until bed-time in demonstrating that the politics of his host had been obsolete for three-quarters of a century. His outdoor exercise, followed by an excellent dinner, had disposed him to retire early; he rose from his chair soon after ten. "There is one thing," he pleasantly remarked to his host, "that I am bound to say in favour of a University education; it has given you a fine taste in victuals." With this compliment, he said "good-night," and went up to bed.

Mr. Batchel himself, as the reader knows, kept later hours. There were few nights upon which he omitted to take bus walk round the garden when the world had grown quiet, even in unfavourable weather. It was far from favourable upon the present occasion; there was but little moon, and a light rain was falling. He determined, however, to take at least one turn round, and calling his terrier Punch from the kitchen, where he lay in his basket, Mr. Batchel went out, with the dog at his heel. He carried, as his custom was, a little electric lamp, by whose aid he liked to peep into birds' nests, and make raids upon slugs and other pests.

They had hardly set out upon their walk when Punch began to show signs of uneasiness. Instead of running to and fro, with his nose to the ground, as he ordinarily did, the terrier remained whining in the rear. Shortly, they came upon a hedgehog lying coiled up in the path; it was a find which the dog was wont to regard as a rare piece of luck, and to assail with delirious enjoyment. Now, for some reason, Punch refused to notice it, and, when it was illuminated for his especial benefit, turned his back upon it and looked up, in a dejected attitude, at his master. The behaviour of the dog was altogether unnatural, and Mr. Batchel occupied himself, as they

passed on, in trying to account for it, with the animal still whining at his heel. They soon reached the head of the little path which descended to the Lode, and there Mr. Batchel found a much harder problem awaiting him, for at the other end of the path he distinctly saw the outline of a boat.

There had been no boat on the Lode for twenty years. Just so long ago the drainage of the district had required that the main sewer should cross the stream at a point some hundred yards below the Vicar's boundary fence. There, ever since, a great pipe three feet in diameter had obstructed the passage. It lay just at the level of the water, and effectually closed it to all traffic. Mr. Batchel knew that no boat could pass the place, and that none survived in the parts above it. Yet here was a boat drawn up at the edge of his garden. He looked at it intently for a minute or so, and had no difficulty in making out the form of such a boat as was in common use all over the Fen country—a wide flat-bottomed boat, lying low in the water. The "sprit" used for punting it along lay projecting over the stern. There was no accounting for such a boat being there: Mr. Batchel did not understand how it possibly could be there, and for a while was disposed to doubt whether it actually was. The great drain-pipe was so perfect a defence against intrusion of the kind that no boat had ever passed it. The Lode, when its water was low enough to let a boat go under the pipe, was not deep enough to float it, or wide enough to contain it. Upon this occasion the water was high, and the pipe half submerged, forming an insuperable obstacle. Yet there lay, unmistakably, a boat, within ten yards of the place where Mr. Batchel stood trying to account for it.

These ten yards, unfortunately, were impassable. The slope down to the water's edge had to be warily trodden even in dry weather. It was steep and treacherous. After rain it afforded no foothold whatever, and to attempt a descent in the darkness would have been to court disaster. After examining the boat again, therefore, by the light of his little lamp, Mr. Batchel proceeded upon his walk, leaving the matter to be investigated by daylight.

The events of this memorable night, however, were but beginning. As he turned from the boat his eye was caught by a white streak upon the ground before him, which extended itself into the darkness and disappeared. It was Punch, in veritable panic, making for home, across flower-beds and other places he well knew to be out of bounds. The whistle he had been trained to obey had no effect upon his flight; he made a lightning dash for the house. Mr. Batchel could not help regretting that Wardle was not there to see. His friend held the coursing powers of Punch in great contempt, and was wont to criticise the dog in sporting jargon, whose terms lay beyond the limits of Mr. Batchel's vocabulary, but whose general drift was as obvious as it was irritating. The present performance, nevertheless, was so exceptional that it soon began to connect itself in Mr. Batchel's mind with the unnatural conduct to which we have already alluded. It was somehow proving to be an uncomfortable night, and as Mr. Batchel felt the rain increasing to a steady drizzle he decided to abandon his walk and to return to the house by the way he had come.

He had already passed some little distance beyond the little path which descended to the Lode. The main path by which he had come was of course behind him, until he turned about to retrace his steps.

It was at the moment of turning that he had ocular demonstration of the fact that the boat had brought passengers. Not twenty yards in front of him, making their way to the water, were two men carrying some kind of burden. They had reached an open space in the path, and their forms were quite distinct: they were unusually tall men; one of them was gigantic. Mr. Batchel had little doubt of their being garden thieves. Burglars, if there had been anything in the house to attract them, could have found much easier ways of removing it.

No man, even if deficient in physical courage, can see his property carried away before his eyes and make no effort to detain it. Mr. Batchel was annoyed at the desertion of his terrier, who might at least have embarrassed the thieves' retreat; meanwhile he called loudly upon the men to stand, and turned upon them the feeble light of his lamp. In so doing he threw a new light not only upon the trespassers, but upon the whole transaction. No response was made to his challenge, but the men turned away their faces as if to avoid recognition, and Mr. Batchel saw that the nearest of them, a burly, square-headed man in a cassock, was wearing the tonsure. He described it as looking, in the dim, steely light of the lamp, like a crown-piece on a door-mat. Both the men, when they found themselves intercepted, hastened to deposit their burden upon the ground, and made for the boat. The burden fell upon the ground with a thud, but the bearers made no sound. They skimmed down to the Lode without seeming to tread, entered the boat in perfect silence, and shoved it off without sound or splash. It has already been explained that Mr. Batchel was unable to descend to the water's edge. He ran, however, to a point of the garden which the boat must inevitably pass, and reached it just in time. The boat was moving swiftly away, and still in perfect silence. The beams of the pocket-lamp just sufficed to reach it, and afforded a parting glimpse of the tonsured giant as he gave a long shove with the sprit, and carried the boat out of sight. It shot towards the drain-pipe, then not forty yards ahead, but the men were travelling as men who knew their way to be clear.

It was by this time evident, of course, that these were no garden-thieves. The aspect of the men, and the manner of their disappearance, had given a new complexion to the adventure. Mr. Batchel's heart was in his mouth, but his mind was back in the 16th century; and having stood still for some minutes in order to regain his composure, he returned to the path, with a view of finding out what the men had left behind.

The burden lay in the middle of the path, and the lamp was once more brought into requisition. It revealed a wooden box, covered in most parts with moss, and all glistening with moisture. The wood was so far decayed that Mr. Batchel had hopes of forcing open the box with his hands; so wet and slimy was it, however, that he could obtain no hold, and he hastened to the house to procure some kind of tool. Near to the cupboard in which such things were kept was the sleeping-basket of the dog, who was closely curled inside it, and shivering violently. His master made an attempt to take him back into the garden; it would be useful, he thought, to have warning in case the boat should return. The prospect of being surprised by these large, noiseless men was not one to be regarded with comfort. Punch, however, who was usually so eager for an excursion, was now in such distress at being summoned that his master felt it cruel to persist. Having found a chisel, therefore, he returned to the garden alone. The box lay undisturbed where he had left it, and in two minutes was standing open.

The reader will hardly need to be told what it contained. At the bottom lay some heavy articles which Mr. Batchel did not disturb. He saw the bases of two candlesticks. He had tried to lift the box, as it lay, by means of a chain passing through two handles in the sides, but had found it too heavy. It was by this chain that the men had been carrying it. The heavier articles, therefore, he determined to leave where they were until morning. His interest in them was small compared with that which the other contents of the box had excited, for on the top of these articles was folded "a paynted cloth," and upon this lay the two gilded censers.

It was the discovery Mr. Batchel had dreamed of for years. His excitement hardly allowed him to think of the strange manner in which it had been made. He glanced nervously around him to see whether there might be any sign of the occupants of the boat, and, seeing nothing, he placed his broad-brimmed hat upon the ground, carefully laid in it the two censers, closed the box again,

and carried his treasure delicately into the house. The occurrences of the last hour have not occupied long in the telling; they occupied much longer in the happening. It was now past midnight, and Mr. Batchel, after making fast the house, went at once upstairs, carrying with him the hat and its precious contents, just as he had brought it from the garden. The censers were not exactly "black-scrap," as Mr. Wardle had anticipated, or pretended to anticipate, but they were much discoloured, and very fragile. He spread a clean handkerchief upon the chest of drawers in his bedroom, and, removing the vessels with the utmost care, laid them upon it. Then after spending some minutes in admiration of their singularly beautiful form and workmanship, he could not deny himself the pleasure of calling Wardle to look.

The guest-room was close at hand. Mr. Wardle, having been already disturbed by the locking up of the house, was fully awakened by the entrance of his host into the room with a candle in his hand. The look of excitement on Mr. Batchel's face could not escape the observation even of a man still yawning, and Mr. Wardle at once exclaimed "What's up?"

"I have got them," said Mr. Batchel, in a hushed voice.

His guest, who had forgotten all about the censers, began by interpreting "them" to mean a nervous disorder that is plural by nature, and so was full of sympathy and counsel. When, however, his host had made him understand the facts, he became merely impatient.

"Won't you come and look?" said Mr. Batchel.

"Not I," said Wardle, "I shall do where I am."

"They are in excellent preservation," said Mr. Batchel.

"Then they will keep till morning," was the answer.

"But just come and tell me what you think of them," said Mr. Batchel, making a last attempt.

"I could tell you what I think of them," answered Wardle, "without leaving my bed, which I have no intention of leaving; but I have to leave Stoneground to-morrow, and I don't want to hurt your feelings, so "Good-night." Upon this, he turned over in bed and gave a loud snore, which Mr. Batchel accepted as a manifesto. He has never ceased to regret that he did not compel his guest to see the censers, but he did not then foresee the sore need he would have of a witness. He answered his friend's good-night, and returned to his own room. Once more he admired the two censers as their graceful outlines stood out, sharp and clear, against the white handkerchief, and having done this, he was soon in bed and asleep. To the men in the boat he had not given another thought, since he became possessed of the box they had left behind; of the other contents of the box he had thought as little, since he had secured the chief treasures of which he had been so long in search.

Now, Mr. Wardle, when he arose in the morning, felt somewhat ashamed of his surliness of the preceding night. His repudiation of all interest in the censers had not been quite sincere, for beneath his affectation of unconcern there lay a genuine curiosity about his friend's discovery. Before he had finished dressing, therefore, he crossed over into Mr. Batchel's room. The censers, to his surprise, were nowhere to be seen. His host, less to his surprise, was still fast asleep. Mr. Wardle opened the drawers, one by one, in search of the censers, but the drawers proved to be all quite full of clothing. He looked with no more success into every other place where they might have been bestowed. His mind was always ready with a grotesque idea, "Blest if he hasn't taken them to bed with him," he said aloud, and at the sound of his voice Mr. Batchel awoke.

His eyes, as soon as they were open, turned to the chest of drawers; and what he saw there, or rather, what he failed to see, caused him, without more ado, to leap out of bed.

"What have you done with them?" he cried out.

The serious alarm of Mr. Batchel was so evident as to check the facetious reply which Wardle was about to frame. He contented himself with saying that he had not touched or seen the things.

“Where are they?” again cried Mr. Batchel, ignoring the disclaimer. “You ought not to have touched them, they will not bear handling. Where are they?”

Mr. Wardle turned away in disgust. “I expect,” he said, “they’re where they’ve been this three hundred and fifty years.” Upon that he returned to his room, and went on with his dressing.

Mr. Batchel immediately followed him, and looked eagerly round the room. He proceeded to open drawers, and to search, in a frenzied manner, in every possible, and in many an impossible, place of concealment. His distress was so patent that his friend soon ceased to trifle with it. By a few minutes serious conversation he made it clear that there had been no practical joking, and Mr. Batchel returned to his room in tears. “Look here, Batchel,” said Mr. Wardle as he left, “you want a holiday.”

Within a few minutes Mr. Batchel returned fully dressed. “You seem to think, Wardle,” he said, “that I have been dreaming about these censors. Come out into the garden and let me shew you the box and the other things.”

Mr. Wardle was quite willing to assent to anything, if only out of pity, and the two went together into the garden, Mr. Batchel leading the way. Going at a great pace, they soon came to the path upon which the box had lain. The marks it had left upon the soft gravel were plain enough, and Mr. Batchel eagerly appealed to his friend to notice them. Of the box and its contents, however, there was no other trace. The whole adventure was described—the strange behaviour and subsequent flight of the terrier—the men with averted faces—the boat—and the opening of the box. Mr. Batchel tried to shake the obvious incredulity of his guest by pointing to the chisel which still lay beside the path. Mr. Wardle only replied, “You want a holiday, Batchel! Let’s go in to breakfast.”

Breakfast on that morning was not the cheerful meal it was wont to be. During the few minutes of waiting for it Mr. Batchel stood at the window of his dining-room looking out upon the site of the well which the gardener had now covered in. He rehearsed the whole of the adventure from first to last, wondering whether the new place of safety would ever be discovered. But he said no more to his guest; his heart was too full.

The two breakfasted almost in silence, and the meal was scarcely over when the cab arrived to take Mr. Wardle to his train. Mr. Batchel bade him farewell, and saw him depart with genuine regret; he was returning sadly into the house when he heard his name called. It was Wardle, leaning out of the window of his cab as it drove away, and waving his hand, “Batchel,” he cried again, “mind you take a holiday.”